

**Science Shoebox Activity**  
**Title: Measuring the Solar System**  
**Grade 6 Earth and Space Science**



**Content Standard 6 - The Universe**  
**Grade Learning Expectation: GLE 0607.6.2**  
Describe the relative distance of objects in the solar system from Earth.

**Checks for Understanding:** 0607.6.2 Construct a model of the solar system showing accurate positional relationships and relative distances.

**State Performance Indicators:** SPI Explain how the relative distance from the Earth affects how they appear.

**Objective:** Students will create a model of the solar system using sentence strips and then they will calculate the approximate distances of the planets.

**Materials:**

pen or pencil  
2.5 in. X11.5 in. Sentence strip  
Ruler  
calculator

**Background Knowledge for teachers**

Students will use knowledge that the Earth is approximately 93 million miles from the sun. 93 million miles is equal to 1 Astronomical Unit (AU). The scale is 0.5 centimeters is equal to 1 AU.

**Across the Curriculum**

**Math**

Student will measure the distance from the sun to each of the objects or planets on their model solar system and using the formula 1AU or 93 million miles (93,000,000) is equal to 0.5 centimeters they will calculate the approximate distance from the sun to the different objects and planets.

SPI 0606.2.6 - Solve problems involving ratios, rates, and percent.

### **Social Studies**

What Ancient civilization's beliefs are closest to our ideas and knowledge of the solar system today?

4.5.01.b Explain the cultures of the Western Hemisphere's native peoples prior to European contact.

### **Language Arts**

Read "Our Solar System" by Seymour Simon and discuss what we found interesting. Did we learn anything new, what?

SPI 0501.6.1 Select questions used to focus and clarify thinking before, during, and after reading text.

### **References:**

Lesson plan adapted from: Butsch, Clarissa. "Scale of the Solar System." n.d.: n. pag. *Better Lessons*. N.p.: Better Lessons.com, n.d. Web.

**\*\*Clean up Procedures-** neatly place everything back in the box and replace the lid.

## **Measuring the Solar System- Answer Key**

**Materials needed:** Sentence strip, ruler, calculator, and a pen or pencil

For the first part you will need your sentence strip and a pen or sharpie.

### **Steps for completing your model:**

1. Write Sun on one end and Pluto on the other end.
2. Fold Pluto to Uranus and write Neptune in the crease.
3. Fold the Sun to Uranus and write Saturn in the crease.
4. Fold the Sun to Saturn and write Jupiter in the crease.
5. Fold the Sun to Jupiter and write Asteroid Belt in the crease.
6. Fold the Sun to the Asteroid Belt and write Mars in the crease.
7. Fold the Sun to Mars and write Venus in the crease.
8. Write Mercury between the Sun and Venus.
9. Only one planet is missing. Can you Name it? Write it between Venus and Mars.

**The second part is a little tricky! This part is to be completed for your**

### **Learning log.**

You will use the scale 0.5 cm is equal 1 AU (93,000,000 miles) to calculate the approximate distances between the Sun and the Planets.

1. Measure the distance between the Sun and Earth with your ruler. Now using the scale (ratio)  $0.5\text{cm} = 1\text{AU}$  (93,000,000 miles) to calculate the approximate distance from the Sun to Earth. What is the distance?

Measurement- 0.5cm

$$0.5\text{cm} = 1\text{AU}$$

$$1\text{AU} = 93,000,000 \text{ miles}$$

It is 93,000,000 miles from the Sun to Earth.

2. Find the distance from the Sun to Uranus.

Measurement - 14cm

$$14\text{cm} \times 2 = 28\text{AU}$$

$$28\text{AU} \times 93,000,000 \text{ miles}$$

$$28\text{AU} = 2,604,000,000 \text{ miles}$$

It is 2,604,000,000 miles from the Sun to Uranus

3. If Jupiter is half the distance from the Sun and Uranus, what is the distance from the Sun to Jupiter?

Uranus is 14cm or 28AU or 2,604,000,000 miles

$$2,604,000,000 \text{ miles} \times 0.5 = 1,302,000,000 \text{ miles} \quad \text{or}$$

$$14\text{cm} \times 0.5\text{cm} = 7\text{cm}$$

$$7\text{cm} \times 2 = 14\text{AU}$$

$$14 \times 93,000,000 \text{ miles}$$

$$14\text{AU} = 1,302,000,000 \text{ miles}$$

It is 1,302,000,000 miles from the Sun to Jupiter.

4. If Pluto is twice the distance from the Sun to Uranus, how far from the Sun to Pluto?

$$\text{Uranus} = 14\text{cm or } 28\text{AU or } 2,604,000,000 \text{ miles}$$

$$2,604,000,000 \text{ miles} \times 2 = 5,208,000,000 \text{ miles or}$$

$$14\text{cm} \times 2 = 28\text{cm}$$

$$28\text{cm} \times 2 = 56\text{AU}$$

$$56\text{AU} = 1,953,000,000$$

It is 1,953,000,000 miles from the Sun to Pluto.

5. Use your ruler and find the distance between Saturn and Neptune.

$$\text{Measurement} = 10.5\text{cm}$$

$$10.5\text{cm} \times 2 = 21\text{AU}$$

$$21 \times 93,000,000 \text{ miles}$$

$$21\text{AU} = 1,953,000,000 \text{ miles}$$

There is 1,953,000,000 miles in distance between Saturn and Neptune.

6. Does the distance between the Sun and the Planets surprise you and do you think this affects the way we see the planets from Earth?

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**Learning log.**

### **Directions:**

Student will use the scale 0.5 cm is equal 1 AU (93,000,000 miles) to calculate the approximate distances between the Sun and the Planets.

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2. Find the distance from the Sun to Uranus.

3. If Jupiter is half way between the Sun and Uranus, what is the distance from the Sun to Jupiter?

4. If Pluto is twice the distance from the Sun to Uranus, how far from the Sun to Pluto?

5. Use your ruler and find the distance between Saturn and Neptune.

6. Does the distance between the Sun and the Planets surprise you and do you think this affects the way we see the planets from Earth?